

Giving All

Luke 20:45-21:4

In Malachi 3 the Lord calls his people back to reflecting his generous character and back to giving a tenth. When you get to the New Testament, you realise that whilst giving a tenth might be a good place to start, it may not be the place to end.

A Generous Heart

Jesus sat in the temple and observed people. The first group he noticed were the scribes. For them religion was about them being the centre of attention. It was about their personal advancement. He warns us not to be like them. The second group was the rich. He contrasts them with a poor widow.

She was the poor of the poor, and yet she caught Jesus' attention as she put in two coins, which were almost worthless. Jesus sees our giving, but it is not the amount he sees – it is the heart behind it. Whilst the rich gave, she gave everything. She gave herself. It is her sacrifice, her whole-hearted devotion that Jesus sees. Her attitude is the opposite of the religion of the scribes.

It is to this sacrificial generosity that the Lord calls us. This is more than money. It is about the whole of our life, 100%, given to the Lord: our time, energy and abilities, as well as our money. But it's hard to see life like this, especially when it comes to money.

A Divided Heart

Jesus says that the deceitfulness of riches can cause us to be less fruitful than we should be. Riches promise us things only God can deliver: security and satisfaction. For this reason, money can become an idol: something you love, trust and obey. And it can begin to control you. Which is why Jesus said we can't serve God and money. But often we try to, and as a result we struggle to live the generous life this woman was living. So how can we cultivate a heart of generosity?

A Heart Transformed by Grace

Jesus said it is hard for the rich to enter the kingdom of God – but that with God it is possible. In Luke 19 we meet a rich – and hated – man, a tax collector, called Zacchaeus. He had made money his god. But Jesus calls Zacchaeus, and he responds with joy. But he also gives away half of his possessions and pays back what he has stolen, plus 300% interest.

What could have caused this transformation in Zacchaeus' life? The answer is the grace of Jesus. Even though Zacchaeus was the least deserving of men, Jesus chose him, and as salvation came to Zacchaeus, generosity flowed out. Now the Lord was his Lord, not money.

When you know that Christ has come for you, when you know that you are on the receiving end of his generosity, when you don't deserve it, it changes your heart. When you know that he gave all for you (not just 10%), you'll give your all for him: finances, time, energy, effort. Because what ever you give is nothing in comparison to what he gave for you.